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TAGS: [CVIS](#) [KFRD](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: Embassy La Paz Validation Study Results

11. (SBU) Summary: Embassy La Paz recently concluded two small validation studies of recipients of J1 visas and members of a traditional Bolivian dance troupe. The Consular Section suspected high overstay rates among both groups and conducted the studies to determine actual return rates. The results revealed that among J1 recipients, au pairs were significantly more likely than non-au pairs to overstay their visas. The Bolivian dance group returned more reliably than expected, though the small sample size used for the study reduced Post's confidence in the significance of the results. End Summary.

BACKGROUND OF SELECTED GROUPS

12. (SBU) Determining Bolivian au pairs' eligibility for a J1 visa is particularly difficult for consular officers. Nearly all of them are young, single women from middle to middle-low class families who have little or no established work history. Their ties to Bolivia are generally scant, they rarely have any international travel, and many times they have a family or friend connection in the United States. In prior meetings with the Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU), Bolivian au pair recruitment organizations have assured consular officers that their candidates are thoroughly vetted to ensure their return to Bolivia. FPU decided to test the integrity of the vetting process by conducting a validation study on J1 recipients with a particular focus on au pairs.

13. (U) FPU also conducted a one hundred percent survey of twenty-seven members of a traditional Bolivian dance group who received a B1/B2 visa between August and September 2009. Members of this group are usually young, single, and from families representing lower socioeconomic groups. After FPU uncovered attempts by several people falsely posing as members of the group, it decided to conduct a validation study on individuals issued visas.

METHODOLOGY

14. (U) FPU randomly selected ninety J1 recipients from a total of 285 visas issued between June 2007 and June 2008. FPU selected the sample cohort using the CCD and Excel as described on the Consular Affairs website. The sample size yielded an eleven percent margin of error at a ninety-five percent confidence interval and a 9.5 percent margin of error at a ninety percent confidence interval. Thirty-nine of the J1 recipients surveyed were au pairs.

15. (U) FPU surveyed 100 percent of the Caporales San Simon dance troupe visa recipients. Of the twenty-seven individuals surveyed, sixteen were female and eleven were male. Twenty-five of the respondents were from the city of Cochabamba while two were from Santa Cruz.

J1 SURVEY RESULTS

16. (U) The J1 validation results revealed that among the thirty-nine au pairs surveyed, fifteen were confirmed overstays compared to twenty-two confirmed returns. FPU was unable to confirm the travel of two individuals. Consequently, the overstay rate for au pair J1s was 38.5 percent.

17. (U) A closer look at the au pair overstays revealed that some of them appear to have legally adjusted status while in the United States. According to information provided by the host families, at least one third of the confirmed overstays adjusted to F1 status. The host family of another au pair extended her J1 status for an additional six months. FPU was unable to contact six of the fifteen host families to inquire about their au pairs' whereabouts.

18. (SBU) Among non-au pair J1s, the overstay rate was 15.6 percent. Of the fifty-one non-au pairs surveyed, eight were confirmed overstays compared to forty-three confirmed returns. Based on these results, FPU concluded that the au pair J1 cohort was considerably more likely to overstay its authorized stay in the United States as compared to the non-au pair group.

CAPORALES SAN SIMON SURVEY RESULTS

19. (U) Results from the Caporales San Simon dance group validation study suggested that the group members are generally good visa applicants. Of the twenty-seven people surveyed, FPU confirmed that twenty-two returned, four did not travel, and only one person overstayed. However, because of the small sample size, the margin of error was significant enough that the results cannot be considered conclusive.

CONCLUSIONS

¶10. (SBU) The J1 validation results confirmed FPU's suspicion that au pairs are more prone to overstay their visas as compared to non-au pairs. Post plans to implement a more rigorous pre-screening process to better assess au pairs' ties to Bolivia.

¶11. (SBU) While the Caporales San Simon validation results were encouraging, FPU cannot draw too many conclusions based on such a small sample size. However, FPU attributes the good return rate to two factors. First, the Caporales group is a well-established troupe that likely creates a strong sense of community for its members which compels them to return. Second, FPU conducted a thorough pre-screening of the applicants prior to their interview to verify their membership within the group.
Creamer